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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2017

Chapter 5

Fostering intergenerational fairness through social dialogue

CHAPTER 5

Fostering intergenerational fairness through social dialogue

1. INTRODUCTION ⁽¹⁾

Social dialogue has the potential to identify and promote win-win solutions for workers and employers of all ages. Social partners play a key role in shaping intergenerational solidarity and fairness. An effective social dialogue relies on a number of framework conditions ⁽²⁾. As the main actors in this dialogue, trade unions and employers' organisations need an encompassing membership, covering all relevant categories of workers and employers. By reaching out to younger workers or recently established employers, social partners can remain alert to the newest developments in the labour market and identify emerging needs. Through collective bargaining and joint actions, social partners can promote innovative solutions to the challenges of population ageing or structural change in the labour market discussed in previous chapters. Social partners are also more likely to have an influence on policy-making if they can form joint positions which they can use when negotiating with governments.

This chapter first reviews the key conditions for effective social dialogue from an age-specific perspective. Section 2 presents evidence on age differences in the membership of trade unions and employers' organisations, self-employment and the coverage of collective bargaining.

Next, the chapter considers the role of social partners in bridging gaps between younger and older workers and their employers, to promote fairer labour markets, more balanced social protection systems and better adapted working conditions for all. Section 3 first presents the main perspectives from which the social partners have addressed intergenerational solidarity. Section 4 provides relevant recent examples of social partners' joint activities to promote intergenerational solidarity at European, national or regional level, across sectors, in a given industry or specific company. Section 5 considers the main linkages between the previous sections, and presents the outlook for capacity-building further to improve social partners' contribution to intergenerational solidarity.

⁽¹⁾ This chapter was written by Evi Roelen, Melissa Thomas and Tim Van Rie, with contributions from David-Pascal Dion, Raymond Maes and Sigfried Caspar (European Commission). Contributions from Eurofound (David Foden, Donald Storrie and Gijs van Houten) are gratefully acknowledged.

⁽²⁾ European Commission (2015a and 2016a).

2. CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE SOCIAL DIALOGUE

While there is significant diversity in national practices across the EU, certain key dimensions for an effective social dialogue can nonetheless be identified. These include social partner organisations (employers' representatives and trade unions) with an encompassing membership, as well as dynamic collective bargaining⁽³⁾. This section provides evidence on these dimensions, covering differences between age groups – and where possible - generations.

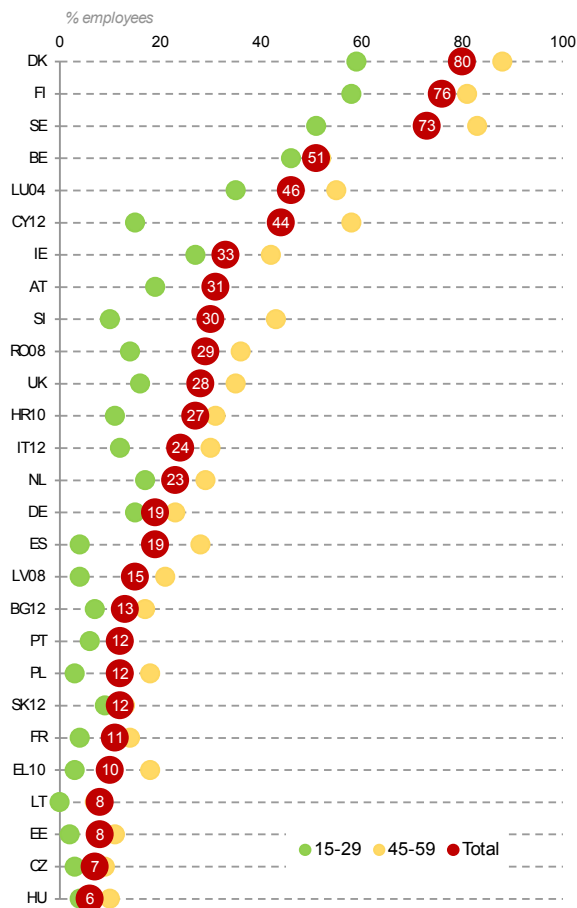
2.1. Membership of workers' organisations

Young employees are less likely than older workers to be members of trade unions. This broad pattern can be observed in most Member States, although to varying degrees (*Chart 5.1*). In many cases, the differences in overall unionisation rates between Member States are larger than those between different age groups within countries. Moreover, younger workers in countries with high overall membership rates (such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden) are more likely to be union members than older employees in countries with lower membership rates (such as Hungary, the Czech Republic or Estonia). Full-time students typically have low rates of union membership⁽⁴⁾.

Chart 5.1

Union membership is lower among younger employees

Union membership among employees by age category, 2014 or latest data year



Note: Fewer than 100 observations for 15-29 in CY, SI, IT, PT. 2012 data for BG, CY, IT, SK; 2010 for HR and EL; 2008 for LV and RO; 2004 for LU. No data for MT.

Source: European Social Survey, authors' calculations

[Click here to download chart.](#)

⁽³⁾ European Commission (2015a). Additional key conditions include trust and cooperation, which are not covered in this overview.

⁽⁴⁾ Visser (2006).

In a number of Member States pensioners make up a sizeable share of union membership. In Austria, Germany, Finland or the Netherlands, the share of retirees among union members is estimated at over 15 % ⁽⁵⁾. For Germany, it has been noted that "*Quite unintentionally, the unions - with 1.7 million retired members - have become one of the largest old-age organisations*" ⁽⁶⁾. For Italy, a similar dynamic had been observed, with growing membership among pensioners and a decrease among workers ⁽⁷⁾. However, the nature of membership among retirees is specific: it typically involves few direct interactions with trade unions, and may be mainly motivated by the provision of certain (non-employment related) services ⁽⁸⁾, such as assistance with the procedures for receiving welfare benefits.

Younger workers are often employed in sectors or companies where unions are less present. Many young people work in the private services sector, where trade union density is typically lower compared with manufacturing or the public sector. They also tend to be overrepresented in smaller enterprises with fewer than 50 employees ⁽⁹⁾. In smaller establishments, trade union presence is often more limited, which may be due to more informal interactions there, as well as to size-related thresholds for workplace representation.

Younger workers are also more likely to be non-standard workers ⁽¹⁰⁾, which is associated with lower union membership. Several studies indicate that atypical workers (including those on fixed-term contracts) are less likely to become union members ⁽¹¹⁾. It may be for lack of a longer-time perspective that such workers may be less interested in becoming union members. Moreover, trade unions themselves may commit fewer resources to recruiting members who may only have a temporary presence.

In addition to recruitment, labour market attachment also plays a role in the retention of existing members. Workers tend to change employers more frequently than they did in the past ⁽¹²⁾. This also implies that for trade unions a life-cycle approach can be more helpful in retaining members ⁽¹³⁾, compared with job-centred approaches in specific workplaces.

Young people are not always aware of the existence or role of trade unions, or they may hold negative views of these organisations. Trade unions are sometimes seen as representing only older workers in a patriarchal or pyramidal structure. To the extent that such views are common among young people, this would clearly be an obstacle to their recruitment as members ⁽¹⁴⁾. Some studies, however, found no evidence for such a basic negative opinion among the young, instead emphasising an overall lack of awareness ⁽¹⁵⁾. Even if they are interested in trade unions and interest representation, young workers may fear that joining a trade union will give them a bad reputation with employers ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Given the more general decline in unionisation ⁽¹⁷⁾, a key question is whether low membership among younger workers is age-specific (part of a life phase for individual workers), or rather a cohort effect (where each generation has a lower rate than the previous one). For (West) Germany, both effects were seen to have had a similar weight in the decrease in union density since the 1980s ⁽¹⁸⁾. In Finland, a particularly strong decrease in membership has been observed for workers born after the 1960s ⁽¹⁹⁾. Such

⁽⁵⁾ Calculations based on European Social Survey 2014. Visser (2006).

⁽⁶⁾ Kohli et al. (1997); Dribbusch and Birke (2014) estimate that pensioners represent 20 % of DGB affiliated unions' membership.

⁽⁷⁾ Chiarini (1999).

⁽⁸⁾ Frangi and Barisione (2015).

⁽⁹⁾ Structure of Earnings Survey 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁾ See Chapter 3.

⁽¹¹⁾ Schnabel (2013).

⁽¹²⁾ See Chapter 3.

⁽¹³⁾ Leschke and Vandaele, (2015) found major gender differences in union leaving rates in Germany.

⁽¹⁴⁾ EFBWW (2016).

⁽¹⁵⁾ Keune (2015).

⁽¹⁶⁾ EFBWW (2016).

⁽¹⁷⁾ European Commission (2016a).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Schnabel and Wagner (2008).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Böckerman and Uusitalo (2006).

cohort effects could partly be explained by changes in institutions supporting union membership, such as reforms to the 'Ghent system' in Denmark, Finland and Sweden (where voluntary unemployment insurance provides incentives to join unions) ⁽²⁰⁾.

Targeted trade union strategies and recruitment efforts play an important role in attracting young members. Between February 2015 and October 2016, NSZZ "Solidarność" from Poland and Unión Sindical Obrera (USO) from Spain organised three training courses in the context of the education programme "The European Social Dialogue". 15 young leaders from both associations were each trained in these capacity building measures. The main objective of the training courses was to improve negotiation and communication skills as well as skills in motivating existing trade union members and attracting new ones. Since 2008 EZA, (Europäisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen/European Centre for Workers' Questions) in cooperation with its member organisations, has been organising courses for young trade unionists. A first cycle was addressed to organisations from Spain, Portugal, Italy and Poland and a second to union representatives from Romania, Poland and Lithuania.

In 2016, sectoral trade unions at European level completed a project aimed at 'Empowering the integration of younger workers in the European Metal, Transport, Food, Services, Construction and Wood Industries' ⁽²¹⁾. The project took stock of obstacles to a better integration of younger workers. It noted that in some cases, trade unions have been slow in engaging with specific challenges linked to youth employment, or have committed few resources ⁽²²⁾.

In certain cases (for example Belgium and Germany), a specific approach of diversifying towards younger workers seems to have been more successful, using substantial resources to establish direct personal contact with young workers ⁽²³⁾. Communication via social media ⁽²⁴⁾ and new mobilisation techniques (for example 'flash mobs' rather than traditional protests) have gained much attention in recruiting and reaching out to younger workers.

Trade unions have established specific youth structures to give young workers a stronger voice within the labour movement. In several Member States, these structures have had a significant influence on union agendas concerning youth unemployment. Moreover, such youth structures have established coalitions with student organisations, for example on the promotion of school-to-work transitions ⁽²⁵⁾.

2.2. Membership of employers' organisations

The intergenerational aspects of employers' representation are less straightforward than for trade unions. Unlike members of workers' organisations, who are individuals, the members of employers' associations are themselves organisational entities (companies or establishments).

Overall, companies that employ relatively few older workers are less likely to be members of an employers' organisation. In establishments where workers aged 50+ make up less than 20 % of staff, membership of employers' organisations engaged in collective bargaining tends to be lower (*Chart 5.2*). While the differences at national level are not always very large, the broad pattern is fairly consistent across countries. Companies with low shares of older workers are particularly present in certain sectors, such as commerce and hospitality, as well as the construction sector ⁽²⁶⁾.

More recently established companies are less likely to be members of employers' organisations, compared to 'older' companies. In France, companies established less than 10 years ago are underrepresented among members of employers' organisations ⁽²⁷⁾. Data from the European Company

⁽²⁰⁾ Høgedahl and Kongshøj (2017).

⁽²¹⁾ The project was coordinated by the EFBWW, in cooperation with EFFAT, EPSU, ETF, IndustriAll Europe and UNI Europa. It received financial support from the European Commission.

⁽²²⁾ Vandaele (2012).

⁽²³⁾ Keune (2015).

⁽²⁴⁾ Fazio (2014).

⁽²⁵⁾ Vandaele (2013).

⁽²⁶⁾ Eurofound (2015a).

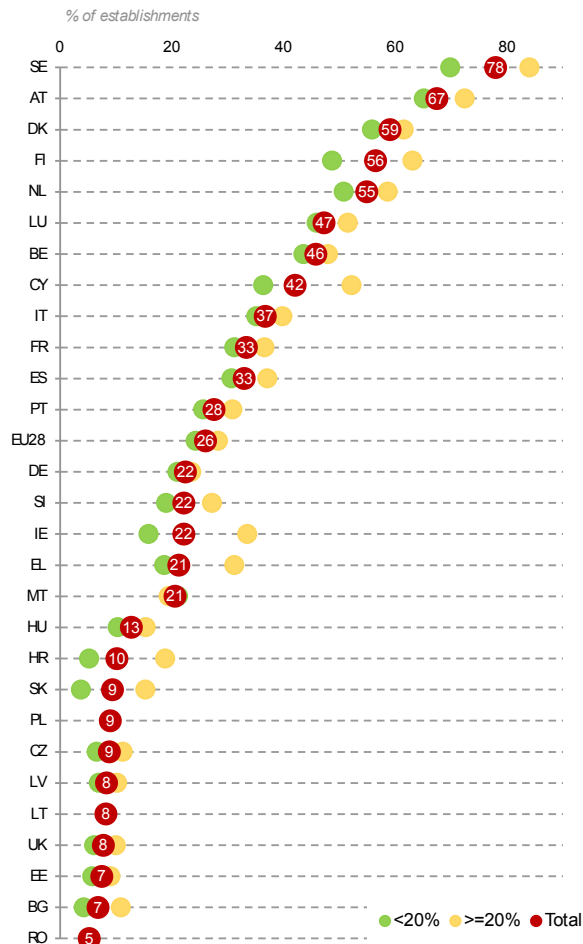
⁽²⁷⁾ Eurofound (2015b).

Survey suggest a similar pattern across most EU Member States. In the EU28, approximately one out of four establishments with 10 or more employees is affiliated to an employers' organisation engaged in collective bargaining. Among companies that were founded less than 10 years ago, this share is lower (some 19 %) than among companies that are at least 10 years old (some 28 %) ⁽²⁸⁾. This broad pattern holds for the majority Member States. As is the case for trade unions, differences in membership rates between countries are in many cases larger than between categories of companies within a country ⁽²⁹⁾.

Chart 5.2

Companies with more older workers are more likely to be members of an employers' organisation

Membership rate of employers' organisations engaged in collective bargaining by share of workers aged 50+ employed, 2013



Note: Establishments with 10 or more employees

Source: Eurofound calculations based on European Company Survey 2013

[Click here to download chart.](#)

2.3. Self-employment

The collective representation of the self-employed differs by professions and by countries. In social dialogue, the self-employed represent a specific category, who cannot easily be classified as either workers or employers. Certain liberal professions (e.g. lawyers or physicians) tend to organise in independent associations, whereas others (journalism, for example) have a tradition of unionisation. Craftspeople and small entrepreneurs are typically organised in specific trade and employer organisations.

⁽²⁸⁾ One limitation of the survey is that it only covers establishments with 10 or more employees. This implies that the most recently established companies may not be covered in the target population.

⁽²⁹⁾ See European Commission (2015a) on the comparison of national levels; European Commission (2016a) on capacity building for social dialogue.

Moreover, similar categories of the self-employed may organise differently from one Member State to the next ⁽³⁰⁾.

In most cases, the terms and conditions of collective agreements apply to employees, but not to the self-employed. Collective bargaining typically establishes minimum working conditions. Outside the remit of an employer-employee relationship, there may be tensions with the principle of fair competition. For this reason, in some (but not all) Member States, the self-employed may be excluded from the application of (certain) collective agreements. Indicators such as union density or collective bargaining coverage are typically calculated with reference to employees (i.e. excluding the self-employed workers, as well as the unemployed and economically inactive).

Given the implications for working conditions, 'new forms of (self-) employment' have garnered growing attention. This applies particularly to 'bogus' self-employment where 'a person is declared as self-employed while fulfilling the conditions characteristic of an employment relationship, in order to avoid certain legal or fiscal obligations' ⁽³¹⁾, including those stemming from collective agreements.

Most self-employed are 'own account workers' who do not employ others. The proportion of self-employed among all workers (employees and self-employed) in the EU28 was 15 % in 2015. Among these, a minority (4 % of all workers) are self-employed with employees. The majority of the self-employed are 'own account workers' who do not employ others (11 % of all workers) ⁽³²⁾. Among the self-employed without employees, a majority (56 %) can be considered 'genuine' independent workers, who have more than one client, possess the authority to hire and dismiss employees and have decision making authority. Whereas a small minority (13 %) fulfil none or only one of these criteria, there remains a substantial grey zone (30 %) meeting two out of three of these conditions ⁽³³⁾.

The proportion of self-employed people among workers increases with age. Whereas less than 10 % of workers aged under 30 are self-employed, this increases to more than 40 % among those aged over 65. Young workers may be facing specific obstacles to becoming self-employed, including access to finance and lack of professional networks from which to find financiers, customers or suppliers ⁽³⁴⁾. In recent years, there have been numerous initiatives to promote entrepreneurship among the young ⁽³⁵⁾.

For older employees, a transition to self-employment may be a way to extend their working lives. Across countries, older employees' transitions into self-employment are influenced by different institutional settings: employees are more likely to shift towards self-employment once they have reached the legal retirement age. A lower degree of employment protection legislation (hence overall lower cost of dismissal) is also associated with more frequent transitions into self-employment ⁽³⁶⁾. Where the self-employed are excluded from the payment of unemployment insurance premiums, but also from coverage, there is a higher likelihood of older employees making a transition towards self-employment. Employees who are more satisfied with their jobs are more likely to become self-employed. Certain age-specific hurdles apply to entrepreneurship at an older age, however, such as limited access to finance (particularly for the older unemployed), a lack of specific skills, health issues or care responsibilities ⁽³⁷⁾.

2.4. Collective bargaining

Collective bargaining is a key aspect of social dialogue. Through collective bargaining, workers' and employers' representatives negotiate on pay and employment or working conditions. Such collective

⁽³⁰⁾ Eurofound (2010); European Commission (2016a), Box 5.3.

⁽³¹⁾ Decision (EU) 2016/344 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on establishing a European Platform to enhance cooperation in tackling undeclared work.

⁽³²⁾ Eurostat, Labour Force Survey.

⁽³³⁾ Eurofound (2016a).

⁽³⁴⁾ European Commission (2015b).

⁽³⁵⁾ Eurofound (2015c); Eurofound (2016b).

⁽³⁶⁾ Mastrogiacomo and Belloni (2015).

⁽³⁷⁾ Kibler et al, (2011).

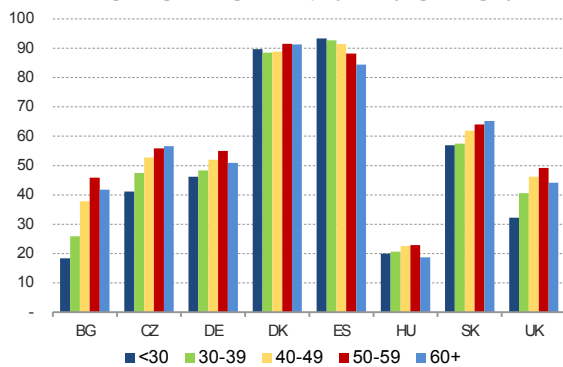
agreements can be concluded at national level, for a given sector, a region, a company or specific establishment.

A collective agreement (³⁸) typically applies to the employer or employers that are signatory to the agreement, either directly, or via an employers' organisation that is mandated to enter into commitments on behalf of its members. Under certain conditions, public authorities can extend the terms of a collective agreement to non-signatory employers. Employees tend to be covered by an agreement via their employers, regardless of whether they themselves are members of the union(s) or workers' organisation(s) that concluded the agreement.

The coverage rate of collective agreements measures the proportion of employees who are covered by such collective agreements. It can be considered an indication of the 'reach' of collective bargaining. Since the crisis, there has been a general decrease in coverage (³⁹), which is particularly pronounced in Romania, Greece and Slovenia (⁴⁰).

(Self-reported) collective bargaining coverage is lower among younger workers. A lower coverage rate for younger workers could imply that they are concentrated in sectors or companies in which no collective agreements apply. *Chart 5.3* shows large differences in coverage between countries, as well as a fairly consistent pattern across different age categories (with lower coverage at younger ages for Member States with sectoral and company level agreements).

Chart 5.3
Younger workers are less likely to be covered by collective wage agreements at company, regional or industry level
Collective bargaining coverage (% employees) by age category, 2014



Note: Does not include MS with collective agreements at national or inter-confederal level (AT, BE, EE, FI, FR, GR, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI) or MS with confidential (CY, LT) or unknown data (HR, SE)

Source: Eurostat, based on Structure of Earnings Survey 2014

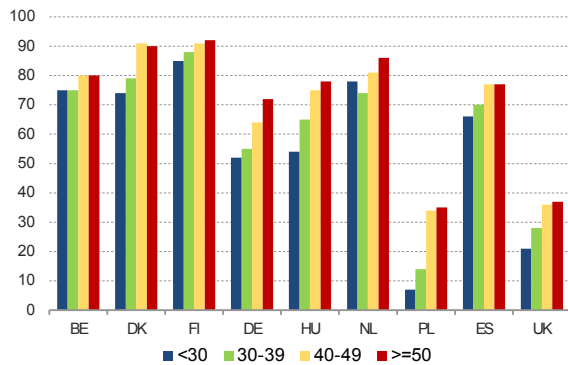
[Click here to download chart.](#)

⁽³⁸⁾ The European Pillar of Social Rights mentions in this regard that social partners should be 'encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in matters relevant to them, while respecting their autonomy and the right to collective action' (COM(2017) 250 final).

⁽³⁹⁾ European Central Bank (2016).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Visser (2016).

Chart 5.4
 Younger workers report lower coverage by collective agreements
 (Self-reported) collective bargaining coverage by age category, 2004-2006



Source: Tijdens and van Klaveren (2007)

[Click here to download chart.](#)

Self-reported data (Chart 5.4) yield a similar picture of lower coverage for younger workers. It should be noted that employees may be covered by a collective agreement without necessarily being aware of this. This could be linked to younger workers being less aware of collective agreements (particularly given their lower rates of trade union membership).

A preliminary conclusion from the above evidence is that there are clear age-related differences in the membership of trade unions, the coverage of collective agreements and - to a different degree - the membership of employers' organisations and self-employment.

If not addressed, low union membership among younger workers may come to challenge the mere survival of trade unions in the long term⁽⁴¹⁾. In the short to medium term, it may cast doubts on the ability of trade unions to represent the interests of all workers across generations (rather than those of a relatively well-protected group of 'insiders'). There is evidence that wage inequality is lower in those Member States where trade unions have a less segmented membership⁽⁴²⁾ and that workers with relatively higher incomes are better represented in trade unions⁽⁴³⁾.

Increasing membership among young workers may create a self-sustaining positive dynamic, given that recruitment by peers tends to be particularly effective. A stronger representation of younger workers or recently established employers also provides social partners with a good perspective on the latest labour market developments.

Age-related differences in the coverage of collective agreements may signal a decreasing capacity of social dialogue to regulate the working conditions of new and emerging business activities. Moreover, if younger workers are less likely to be covered by collective agreements, they are less likely to benefit from measures that are jointly promoted by workers' and employers' representatives (see next section).

3. SOCIAL PARTNERS' APPROACHES TO INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES

Social partners have applied different perspectives to reconciling the interests of younger and older workers. In attempts to promote such solutions, three broad categories can be identified: (1) the replacement approach; (2) promoting synergies between generations; and (3) a lifecycle approach⁽⁴⁴⁾.

⁽⁴¹⁾ EFBWW (2016).

⁽⁴²⁾ Hassel (2015) based on an insider/outsider ratio that summarizes differences in union density rates by sex, by age (<25 versus 25-65); by contract type; by income category (below or above the median); by past unemployment experience; by working hours, by sector.

⁽⁴³⁾ Becher and Pontusson, (2011).

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The framework is based on Tros and Keune (2015).

Before discussing each in turn, it is important to note that there may exist different priorities or opposing views between employers and workers regarding key age-related issues.

Some age-specific issues are controversial between employers and workers. Contentious matters include age-specific working conditions, particularly wages. In certain Member States, collective agreements⁽⁴⁵⁾ or minimum wages⁽⁴⁶⁾ may provide for specific reduced pay rates for younger workers⁽⁴⁷⁾. Trade unions tend to oppose such specific rates, which they consider as conflicting with the goals of equal pay for equal work. Employers tend to be critical of seniority-based wage structures, which they consider as obstacles to retaining or recruiting older workers⁽⁴⁸⁾.

There may also be different views between employers and workers on traineeships. Employers tend to emphasise their role as an entry into the labour market. Trade unions tend to be more concerned about a displacement of regular employment, or about downward pressure on overall working conditions.

Views differ also on non-standard types of employment. Trade unions may fear that the non-standard contracts currently mostly affecting young people⁽⁴⁹⁾ will become the new 'norm'. Employers may prioritise short-term considerations, such as flexibility of staff and immediate return on investment in terms of training expenditure, over long-term considerations, such as career planning and long-term skills management. To achieve mutually beneficial outcomes social partners must work together in a relationship of mutual trust.

3.1. The 'replacement' approach

The 'replacement' approach considers older and younger workers as substitutes. This implies that both groups compete for a fixed number of jobs (or working hours). From this perspective, older workers are encouraged to reduce working time or exit the labour market early⁽⁵⁰⁾. The assumption is that this will facilitate the labour market integration of younger workers, and ease the transition of older workers into retirement.

Social partners have in the past promoted early exit policies. In response to increases in unemployment following the oil crises of the 1970s, many older workers were given the opportunity to exit early from the labour market, via specific pathways in social security systems. Along with governments, trade unions and employers' organisations helped to institutionalise these pathways in many Member States. Social partners supported these policies in their capacity of co-managers of the social security institutions or by concluding specific collective agreements⁽⁵¹⁾.

Initially, the early exit policies were presented as beneficial for employers, younger and older workers. For employers, early exit often provided an option to reduce headcounts and labour costs, increasing productivity, while avoiding conflict or costs associated with employment protection legislation. Trade unions supported these systems because they allowed older workers to reduce their working time under attractive financial conditions and with income security. The departure of older workers was also seen as benefiting younger workers: the early exit of older workers would free 'scarce' jobs for labour market entrants.

Eventually, these policies came to be seen as contributing to insider-outsider problems. Early exit was often used in the context of restructuring. This meant that the older workers' jobs disappeared, instead of being taken up by younger workers. In other cases, younger workers may have lacked the

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Tros and Keune (2015).

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Eurofound (2017).

⁽⁴⁷⁾ European Commission (2016b) finds that minimum wages at conventional levels do not have large negative impacts on total employment rates. However, there may be some negative effects on employment of low wage groups, including youth. These may have to be weighed against social costs.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ See Chapter 3 for the determinants of wage premium.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ See Chapter 3.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ See Chapter 4.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Ebbinghaus (2001).

specific skills (or training) to replace retirees. While the employment rates of (mostly male) older workers declined, benefits for young generations often failed to materialise ⁽⁵²⁾.

The costs of early exit were often (partly) externalised by specific firms or sectors, leading to increases in social expenditure. This put upward pressure on non-wage labour costs, which in turn contributed to making labour market entry – including for younger generations – more difficult. More generally, the costs of early retirement weighed heavily on the sustainability of public finances and the future outlook for pension adequacy. Demand for early exit was particularly strong in manufacturing sectors exposed to international competition ⁽⁵³⁾.

3.2. Promoting synergies

Synergies between older and younger workers build on their relative strengths and complementarities. Whereas the replacement approach considers older and younger workers as readily interchangeable, this perspective emphasises their different profiles. The idea is that younger and older workers can learn from each other. Young workers are often aware of the newest knowledge and technologies, but lack organisational and work experience. Older workers, on the contrary, obtained the necessary experience, which enabled them to develop specific knowledge and skills, but are often less up to date on relevant theoretical and technological novelties. By promoting age diversity and the transfer of knowledge and skills between generations, all parties will be better off.

This difference in profiles creates opportunities for mutual learning and support at the workplace. This can take place in an organised and formal manner, for example, via an exchange of instructions from the older to the younger workers, but it happens also in a more informal way, for instance, while resolving unforeseen problems in day-to-day work. It is important to emphasise that the process goes in two directions, from the old to the young and the other way around. Social partners play an active role in promoting such synergies. This will be further discussed in Section 4.

3.3. Lifecycle perspectives

The lifecycle approach focuses on people's individual needs throughout their careers. Those needs, for instance regarding work-life balance, change over time, depending on important events such as birth of a child, sickness of a parent, loss of a job or a changing personal health situation.

This perspective implies targeted policies for different age categories. It acknowledges the changing needs of workers at different phases of their (working) lives. For example, policies that stimulate vocational training could focus on labour market entrants, whereas the promotion of working hours flexibility could be targeted on workers with young children or with other relatives in need of care. Moreover, the lifecycle perspective is clearly associated with sustainable employment over the life course, since its aim is to create living and working conditions that 'support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life' ⁽⁵⁴⁾. The role of social partners in promoting life cycle perspectives is discussed in Section 4.

Actions by social partners can take many different forms. Bipartite collective agreements between workers and employers' representatives can be concluded for a given company, a sector or a region, or across sectors, as appropriate. In some cases, the social partners jointly manage funds to support these actions (for instance to organise training or fund working time arrangements). While these bottom-up approaches tend to be well tailored to the needs of the employers and workers covered, they require a level of organisation which – despite similar needs – may be lacking in other sectors or companies.

Public authorities may support collective agreements or even incentivise social partners to take up certain issues. Under specific conditions, the state can opt to extend the conditions of an agreement to other employers and workers. By doing so, it overcomes the uneven coverage of sectors or companies.

⁽⁵²⁾ Eichhorst et al. (2014).

⁽⁵³⁾ Schmitt and Starke (2016).

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Eurofound (2016c).

The state may also provide financial support to social partners' joint actions. In such cases, there is a delicate balance to be maintained with the autonomy of the social partners.

4. SOCIAL PARTNERS' CONTRIBUTION TO INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS AND SOLIDARITY

In recent years, social partners' common actions have increasingly promoted synergies between generations. They frequently raise awareness, start discussions, are involved in policy and law-making, campaign and provide support on many issues related to intergenerational fairness. By doing so, social partners promote synergies between generations and take into account individual needs and aspirations of workers, as described in the previous subsections (3.2. and 3.3.). This section examines how social dialogue and social partners have been contributing to promoting intergenerational fairness and solidarity. It does so by presenting some practices developed by social partners in tackling inequalities between generations.

Over the past 15 years the number of topics covered by collective bargaining has increased in many Member States ⁽⁵⁵⁾. Many of these topics are relevant to intergenerational fairness and solidarity. Social partners have addressed the challenges and contributed to policy-making in the field of, for example, promotion of active ageing, employability and training, and work organisation. Many of these topics have been addressed at the company level, in particular in Finland, Germany and Sweden ⁽⁵⁶⁾. The Collective Agreement n°104 on employment for older workers in Belgium is another example in that respect. It requires companies with more than 20 employees to report annually on the measures taken to keep older workers employed and to attract new employees aged 45 and above ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Active ageing is an important aspect of the social partners' contribution to intergenerational fairness and solidarity. It encourages older workers, in particular, to work longer and promotes mutual learning between generations. European cross-industry social partners define active ageing as "optimising opportunities for workers of all ages to work in good quality, productive and healthy conditions until legal retirement age, based on mutual commitment and motivation of employers and workers" ⁽⁵⁸⁾. The aim of the European social partners' autonomous framework agreement on active ageing and an intergenerational approach, signed on 8 March 2017, is to build on the strengths and the specific situation of each worker, regardless of age, in order to foster solidarity between generations at the workplace.

Linking active ageing to an intergenerational approach clearly takes into account the aspect of fostering solidarity between generations. The framework agreement of the cross-industry European social partners is built on a shared commitment of employers, workers and their representatives, taking into account the needs of all generations. It has the following aims: (1) increasing the awareness of the challenges that arise as a result of demographic change; (2) providing practical tools required to manage active ageing; (3) helping to maintain a healthy and safe working environment; (4) fostering life-cycle approaches to keep workers in the labour market until the legal retirement age; and (5) encouraging and assisting intergenerational cooperation at the workplace.

European sectoral social dialogue also addressed active ageing, often together with intergenerational issues. Sectoral social partners in the domains of insurance, commerce, postal services, hospitals and healthcare, gas, electricity, textiles and clothing issued common documents on active ageing (see *Table 5.1*). More joint results could be found when taking into account actions to promote lifelong learning with a substantial age-related component, for example the Joint Declaration on

⁽⁵⁵⁾ However, there is still a small group of countries where the range of topics on the collective bargaining agenda has been reduced since the crisis, for example in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Hungary.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Eurofound (2015d).

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (2017).

⁽⁵⁸⁾ BusinessEurope, CEEP, UEAPME and ETUC (2017).

Table 5.1
European sectoral social partners and active ageing

Sector	Subject	Date
Insurance	The demographic challenge revisited: innovative measures in the European insurance sector	12/05/2016
Commerce	Voluntary guidelines supporting age diversity in Commerce	11/02/2016
Post	Joint Declaration on Demographic change in the European Postal Sector	17/07/2015
Hospitals	Guidelines and examples of good practice to address the challenges of an ageing workforce	4/12/2013
Insurance	Combatting the demographic challenge in the insurance sector. A selection of initiatives in Europe	30/11/2012
Insurance	Joint statement on demographical challenges of the insurance sector	26/01/2010
Gas	Toolkit. Demographic change, age management and competencies in the gas sector in Europe	15/10/2009
Electricity	Demographic Change in the Electricity Industry in Europe. Toolkit on promoting age diversity and age management strategies	15/12/2008
Textile and clothing	Restructuring recommendations: how to secure better anticipation and management of industrial change and sectoral restructuring	1/05/2008
Commerce	Voluntary guidelines supporting age diversity in Commerce	11/03/2002

Source: Social dialogue texts database

continuing professional development and lifelong learning for all health workers in the EU ⁽⁵⁹⁾ and the Joint Declaration on future skills needs in the ICT industry ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

The European sectoral social partners in the hospital and healthcare sector (EPSU and HOSPEEM) adopted in 2013 guidelines and examples of good practice to address the challenges of an ageing healthcare workforce. The aim was to provide guidance for social partners, policy-makers, managers, workers and other stakeholders at the local or sectoral level in key areas such as talent management and training, flexible work and health and safety at work. By fostering an integrated approach, taking into account the whole workforce in the hospital and healthcare sector, social partners clearly encourage solutions that are beneficial to different generations in the workforce ⁽⁶¹⁾.

A Joint Declaration on demographic change was signed by the European social partners in the postal sector in July 2015. While recognising the importance of efforts already made in the postal sector, they encourage the adoption of more strategic approaches to generation management ⁽⁶²⁾.

The European social partners in the European food and drink industry developed a toolbox comprising good practices, lessons learned and recommendations for the benefit of employers, workers and trade unions that are active in the sector. Guidance is given on attracting new talent, managing the ageing workforce and improving the sector's image. Lifelong learning, work-life balance and occupational health and safety are important areas in which recommendations are made ⁽⁶³⁾.

Box 5.1 shows how social partners at the European sectoral level addressed questions on active ageing, healthier and longer working lives, health and safety at work and reconciling work and family life in the field of insurance. It also mentions some initiatives at the company level.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ HOSPEEM and EPSU (2016).

⁽⁶⁰⁾ UNI Europa and ETNO (2014).

⁽⁶¹⁾ EPSU and HOSPEEM (2013).

⁽⁶²⁾ PostEurop and UNI Europa (2015).

⁽⁶³⁾ EFFAT and FOODDRINK Europe (2016).

Social dialogue can make a significant contribution in different ways to fostering intergenerational fairness. The next sections of this chapter deal with the following key areas in which social partners have contributed to enhancing solidarity across the generations:

- skills development and lifelong learning;
- social protection;
- active labour market policies and employment protection legislation;
- work-life balance; and
- health and safety at work.

Examples will be given at different levels: European, national, local or company level. Good practices of the social partners in these areas fit in with the lifecycle approach and take into account the different needs of distinct generations⁽⁶⁴⁾. They also contribute to the promotion of synergies between generations.

4.1. Skills development and lifelong learning

Social partners have contributed to increasing labour market participation by fostering skills development and lifelong learning. This spans the entire life cycle and helps to improve opportunities for the young and old alike. By building on the strengths and complementarities of different generations, social partners strive for better use of available human resources and the realisation of their full potential, which is important in the face of population ageing and a shrinking workforce⁽⁶⁵⁾. Initiatives in this area have facilitated the transition from education to employment for the young as well as easing transitions between jobs and adapting to new technologies for older workers⁽⁶⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ For example: CER and ETF (2016).

⁽⁶⁵⁾ See Chapter 2.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Eurofound (2016d).

Box 5.1: Working longer as addressed by the insurance social partners

The topic of “working longer” has been identified for action by the social partners in the insurance sectoral social dialogue. In a Joint Statement on the demographic challenge in the insurance sector signed in January 2010, the social partners addressed questions of active ageing; healthier and longer working lives; health and safety at work; and reconciling work and family life. The European insurance sector social partners call upon their members, as well as all interested parties in the insurance sector, to consider and review their own practices in light of this joint statement.

Further, in the framework of a joint project funded by the European Commission, the social partners involved in the Insurance Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (ISSDC) implemented a joint project on “Addressing the Demographic Challenge in the Insurance Sector: A Collection and Dissemination of Good Practices”. The project, which was financially supported by the European Union, aimed to help the insurance sector address efficiently the demographic changes it is currently facing, with the average age of employees in the insurance sector increasing and many workers approaching retirement age. The project was the very first initiative that contributed to tackling the demographic challenge in the insurance sector with a pan-European perspective.

As a result, two booklets were published in 2012 and 2016 showcasing a selection of initiatives that European insurance companies have introduced to attract and retain talent.

The publication of 2016 covers the area of longer working lives and includes two examples from Italy and Belgium. In Italy, the programme “Long Life Opportunity Initiative” from Groupama Assicurazioni focused on age management, targeting in particular employees over 55 years old. In the framework of the project, a training needs exercise was carried out, and measures such as tutoring aimed at teaching older employees how to mentor younger employees were implemented.

In Belgium, the Minerva programme for workers aged 55+, or “how to enjoy working longer” at KBC, aimed at counterbalancing demographic trends faced with the reality that 1/5 of employees would be older than 60 within 5 years. Since then, the Minerva programme is the end-of-career policy within KBC in Belgium. It is subject to a continual circle of HR processes, so that Minerva can adapt its strategy to the changing internal and external context.

Apprenticeships ease the transition from education to work, thereby improving the labour market access of the young. In this respect, it is worth noting that the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) aims to improve the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships in Europe. It is a unique platform which brings together governments, social partners and other stakeholders. The alliance was launched in July 2013 by a joint declaration of the European Social Partners, the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

The European cross-industry social partners agreed in 2016 on a joint statement on a shared vision of apprenticeships ⁽⁶⁸⁾. Moreover, governments, trade unions and employers' organisations from EU Member States and partner countries recently adopted an opinion on apprenticeships as part of the tripartite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. One of the aims is to make apprenticeships attractive to both employers and young people by ensuring that there is good quality training which leads to subsequent integration in the labour market. In 2015 several pledges were signed by education Ministers, the European social partners and the Commission to offer more and better training opportunities to young people.

Also tutorship is seen as a way for older and more experienced workers to share experience and know-how with younger workers. Tutorship is considered as beneficial to both sides. Young workers learn from older workers, the latter experiencing more variety in work content, while transmitting their know-how. In general experienced workers perceive this as a welcome change in their day-to-day work. Moreover, in physically demanding sectors, it allows older workers to reduce heavy work activities.

European social partners actively contributed to promoting tutorship. In the construction sector, they actively promote tutorship as a means to increase the attractiveness of the sector particularly for younger workers. They advise on how to set up tutorship within companies and highlight a best practice in Italy where social partners together with the national training organisation in construction launched a joint project to stimulate tutorship in construction companies (see below). European social partners in the

⁽⁶⁷⁾ ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP, UEAPME European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2013).

⁽⁶⁸⁾ BusinessEurope, CEEP, UAEPME and ETUC (2016).

construction sector particularly underline the importance of social dialogue to stimulate the dissemination of good examples and strive for the exchange of experience and know-how between Member States' organisations ⁽⁶⁹⁾.

European social partners in the woodworking industry are equally concerned with demographic changes. They promote several national good practices in order to attract young workers and to keep older workers in the workforce. For example in the Belgian woodworking sector, social partners train older employees on how to transfer knowledge and experience to newcomers ⁽⁷⁰⁾.

The European social partners representing the chemical industry have recently started a joint project aiming to increase the mobility of young jobseekers across Europe. This could substantially increase chances of finding employment. The focus of the project lies on offering qualified support through a dedicated mentoring network, to support them in improving their working life ⁽⁷¹⁾.

In several Member States social partners facilitate the training of young workers. In Denmark, the government and a number of social partners agreed on a plan aiming to maintain a sufficient level of skilled labour in the future. Employers committed themselves to supplying, by 2025, 8 000 to 10 000 additional apprenticeship places. This should encourage young people to enter vocational education in order to meet the required skills composition of workers.

The Italian Government reformed its apprenticeship system, introducing a national regulation on the role of the tutor. To implement this reform, Italian social partners and the national training organisation for construction launched a joint project on the promotion of tutorship in the Italian construction sector ⁽⁷²⁾.

In France, the ENGIE Group and its trade union representatives signed the 'Older Employees Agreement' in 2009 within the context of the national action plan for older workers 2006-2010 ('plan national d'action concerté pour l'emploi des seniors 2006-2010') that was supported by the social partners. The Agreement was implemented between January 2010 and December 2012 at the company level and aimed for better integration of older workers in the workforce with a particular focus on the provision of training opportunities and on the promotion of older workers' know-how by tutoring and mentoring programmes ⁽⁷³⁾. In the period 2010-2012 more than 7 000 interviews with older workers were carried out in order to learn what they expect from the second part of their career and to rethink their role within the company concerning the transmission of knowledge and skills ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

In some Member States social partners link training and skills transfers with secure future employment for the young. In Germany, for instance, the Metalworkers' Union and the Baden-Wuerttemberg Employer Association for the Metal and Electrical Industry agreed that trainees will be offered a job after completion of their training ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

The "Contrat de Génération" introduced by the French Government in 2012 explicitly aims at promoting skills transfers between young and older workers and at keeping both groups in the labour market. The 'contrat' combines mandatory bargaining at the firm level with subsidies to firms on the condition that the firm employs young workers on open-ended employment contracts and keeps or recruits experienced workers. In the years between 2013 and 2015, 'generation contracts' were signed by 49 000 young workers. Whereas 21 % of the 2013 and 2014 contracts were terminated in the course of the first year and 20 % of the 2013 contracts the year after, often at the request of the employee, these levels were below the ones for workers between 15 and 24 years with 'normal' open-ended employment contracts ⁽⁷⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ FIEC and EFBWW (2003 and 2015).

⁽⁷⁰⁾ CEI-Bois and EFBWW (2014).

⁽⁷¹⁾ ECEG, FECIA and industriAll European Trade Union (2017).

⁽⁷²⁾ EBC (2012).

⁽⁷³⁾ GDF SUEZ (2009).

⁽⁷⁴⁾ ENGIE (2012).

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Eurofound (2013).

⁽⁷⁶⁾ DARES (2016).

4.2. Social protection

Social dialogue and social partners also contribute to the functioning of social protection systems.

This is particularly the case for those occupational welfare systems where social partners (bilaterally or through employers' unilateral action) have introduced supplementary social protection, especially through occupational pensions. While labour market reforms carried out in the course of the recovery from the crisis may have encouraged job creation, social protection was often weakened during the crisis years. In addition, flexible work became more prevalent⁽⁷⁷⁾ and new forms of work diminished the right to social protection. Occupational welfare can offer additional protection in these cases. This is particularly the case for the risk of unemployment and the provision of both passive and active labour market policies⁽⁷⁸⁾. For instance, Swedish trade unions and employers jointly regulate funds providing both passive and active labour market policies in the form of Employment Transitional Agreements⁽⁷⁹⁾. It should be noted, however, that occupational welfare provision does not play a significant role in all Member States and strongly depends on the structure of a country's industrial relations system; its effectiveness relies on its interplay with the statutory welfare provision.

Social partners often play a key role in overall pension reforms⁽⁸⁰⁾. Further reforming pension systems remains a key challenge for many Member States. The European Semester Country-Specific Recommendations issued in 2015 identify the pension system as a longer term challenge for a number of Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia)⁽⁸¹⁾ and call on these countries to consult with social partners on reforms aimed at ensuring the sustainability and adequacy of the systems. In response to a Country Specific Recommendation in Finland, a major pension reform was negotiated by the social partners and subsequently introduced by the government. The aim is to lengthen working careers, linking the pension age to life expectancy, with a gradual increase of the lowest pension age from 63 to 65 years⁽⁸²⁾. Such an approach can be seen as a positive contribution to addressing the issue of intergenerational fairness.

4.3. Active labour market policies and employment protection legislation

Social partners have been involved in active labour market policies (ALMP) and in modernising employment protection legislation. ALMP refers to measures that bring jobseekers and other disadvantaged groups into the labour force and into jobs. Employment protection legislation deals with rules and procedures for the hiring and dismissal of workers, such as rules for dismissals in case of collective redundancies, as well as conditions for using temporary and fixed-term contracts. To the extent that these policies mainly concern younger workers (who are for instance more likely to have temporary contracts, see Chapter 3) or older workers, they can play an important role in overcoming the generational labour market divide.

Certain groups of workers are more vulnerable with respect to employment security. In particular for young, older and low-skilled workers it is difficult to find a new position after a job loss. Moreover, young workers are often made redundant first in the aftermath of a recession. This is partly due to their specific job conditions, for example temporary contracts, which often offer lower employment security compared with older workers on permanent contracts.

National social partners actively contributed to labour market reforms, fostering intergenerational solidarity. In 2013, a labour market reform was adopted in Slovenia with active involvement of the social partners. The reform aims at reducing segmentation and introducing greater flexibility in the labour market by reducing protection of permanent contracts, simplifying dismissal procedures, reducing

⁽⁷⁷⁾ See Chapter 3.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ However, the access to passive labour market policies only for specific groups of workers covered by occupational welfare could contribute to segmentation within the labour market as well.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Jansson et al. (2016).

⁽⁸⁰⁾ For a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the involvement of social partners in pension reforms, see European Commission (2013).

⁽⁸¹⁾ COM(2016) 95 final, p.17.

⁽⁸²⁾ See Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the reform and a simulation of its long-run impact.

dismissal costs and tightening regulation of fixed-term contracts to reduce misuse. These measures aim to encourage the transition from a temporary to a permanent contract, which is particularly important for younger workers as they are more likely to be employed on temporary contracts ⁽⁸³⁾.

A similar reform, named the Work Security Act (Wet Werk en Zekerheid), was adopted by the Dutch government as a follow-up of the tripartite Social Agreement of 11 April 2013. With respect to workers with permanent contracts, the Act introduced simplified dismissal rules and procedures as well as decreased severance payments. On the other hand, the rights of workers with flexible contracts were enhanced. This was done by a limitation of up to three in the number of temporary contracts and with a maximum total duration of two years. Moreover, an increase in waiting time for the renewal of a temporary contract from three to six months after the limit of three contracts or two years was introduced. These measures aim to encourage the transition from a temporary to a permanent contract ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

In Italy, the 2014 renewed collective agreement on temporary workers settled a minimum pay rate for fixed-term temporary agency workers. Similarly, in Belgium the law on temporary agency work was adapted in 2012 based on an agreement between the social partners. The use of successive daily contracts was limited. Moreover, it created a legal framework for cases where employers use temporary agency work as a means of selecting candidates to be offered a longer term or even permanent contract after the temporary period ⁽⁸⁵⁾.

Social partners have contributed to cost reduction related to job transitions across the life course.

In Sweden, for example, agreements on job security and job transitions were established by the social partners with the aim of supporting employees and employers affected by restructuring, thereby supplementing the role of local public employment agencies. These agreements played an important role in combating unemployment and easing restructuring in Sweden after the deep economic downturn of 2008. For example, in 2015, nine out of ten dismissed jobseekers found a new job or created their own enterprise within seven months after the first contact with the Job Security Foundations ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

In a number of cases social partners have contributed to the regularisation of non-standard contracts. Proportionally more young workers than older ones are employed with this type of contract ⁽⁸⁷⁾; therefore in this respect social partners' involvement contributes to intergenerational fairness.

In June 2006, a tripartite working group was appointed to examine the use of fixed-term employment in order to avoid its misuse in Finland. This resulted in the amendment of the 2011 Employment Contracts Act which stipulates that the use of consecutive employment contracts is not allowable when the employer's need for a workforce is long-term and this can be shown by the number of fixed-term contracts or their duration. The employer became obliged to inform the employee of the grounds for concluding a fixed-term contract.

4.4. *Work-life balance*

Family-related leave and flexible working time arrangements contribute to reconciling work and private life. The specific need for these arrangements depends on the (private) situation of each worker at a certain moment in his or her life. In particular, workers such as parents with children or those with older relatives who need care might ask for appropriate arrangements balancing work and family life. Employers providing solutions for reconciling work and family life will be seen as more attractive by workers.

⁽⁸³⁾ European Commission (2015) SWD(2015)43.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ European Commission (2017) SWD(2017)84.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ Eurofound (2016c).

⁽⁸⁶⁾ Anxo (2016).

⁽⁸⁷⁾ See Chapter 3.

Initiatives to improve the work-life balance not only stimulate more intergenerational fairness: they also encourage gender equality. The European Commission has recently published its proposal for a directive on work-life balance for parents and carers ⁽⁸⁸⁾, after consultation with the social partners. Besides striving for better balancing of caring and professional responsibilities, the objectives of the Commission proposal are to stimulate a more equitable use of work-life balance policies between women and men and to strengthen gender equality in the labour market.

The European social partners in the cleaning sector adopted the Joint Declaration on daytime cleaning in 2007. While the usual working hours of an employee in the cleaning sector are in the early morning or in the late afternoon and evening, social partners argued that an increase in daytime cleaning would be beneficial to clients (e.g. reduced costs), contractors (e.g. better staff availability) and employees (e.g. better reconciliation with family life) ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

The Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs envisages changes to its parental leave system, involving social partners and other relevant stakeholders. With 18 months of leave at full wage replacement rates, it is a fairly generous system in comparison with other countries, contributing to an improved work-life balance of young parents. However, since these long spells of parental leave are currently almost always taken up by women, it causes gender inequality at the same time. Therefore, the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs plans to divide at least a part of the parental leave entitlement between the parents on a non-transferable basis ⁽⁹⁰⁾.

A recent collective agreement in the German rail sector introduces a menu of options on working time arrangements. Employees can choose individually whether they prefer a higher salary on the one hand or more holidays or shorter working hours for a slightly lower salary on the other ⁽⁹¹⁾. A similar system exists in Sweden called "Life working time" (Livstidsarbetstidspremie): 0.5 % of labour income per year can be saved in a working time account. This can be used to take leave and to reduce working time. It can also be taken out in cash (except in the engineering sector) ⁽⁹²⁾.

4.5. Health and safety at work

Measures addressing health and safety at work often target older workers. However, there is a growing tendency to take a life-course perspective to healthy ageing, acknowledging that each age group faces different challenges at work, making them vulnerable to other health problems ⁽⁹³⁾. As the retirement age increases and working lives tend to become longer, efforts must be made to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for all age categories in order to make longer careers possible ⁽⁹⁴⁾. Since European citizens will have to work longer to ensure the sustainability of pension systems in the face of population ageing, prevention of workplace accidents, work-related symptoms and diseases in all-age groups will become an even more important priority. Good occupational health and safety provisions should enable workers of all ages to extend their working lives, thereby contributing to the fair intergenerational sharing of the burdens associated with demographic change.

Social partners have been involved in measures to promote occupational health and safety. In the framework of the European sectoral social dialogue, the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) and the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) developed the Guide for Developing a Health and Safety Management System. With this initiative European social partners want to encourage construction companies of all sizes to introduce and develop a health and safety management policy. By stimulating the creation of a better working environment and the reduction of accidents, the

⁽⁸⁸⁾ COM(2017) 253 final.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ EFCI and UNI-Europa (2007).

⁽⁹⁰⁾ European Commission (2017), SWD(2017) 72.

⁽⁹¹⁾ Elektrische Bahnen (2016).

⁽⁹²⁾ Anxo (2017).

⁽⁹³⁾ EU-OSHA (2016), p.4.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ EU-OSHA (2017).

guide contributes to the health of construction workers, also enabling them to work longer. The guide should serve as a complementary tool to the EU/national legislation and ILO OSH guidelines ⁽⁹⁵⁾.

The European social partners in the construction sector also cooperate on the topic of psycho-social risks at the workplace, which is the second most frequently reported work-related health problem in Europe, after musculoskeletal disorders. In 2004, the social partners contributed to the study: "Stress in the European construction sector up-to-the-minute?" ⁽⁹⁶⁾. In 2017, the social partners launched a new project "Mental Health in Construction Work" aimed at assessing the main factors of psycho-social risks in the workplace in the construction sector and at collecting and sharing examples of national best practice and developing a common methodology to address such risks tailored to the needs and circumstances of the construction sector ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

In the Austrian rail sector, the *Betriebliche Gesundheitsförderung* (BGF) Charter was signed by the *Österreichische Bundesbahnen* (ÖBB) ⁽⁹⁸⁾ management in 2006 on the initiative of the social partners. The BGF promotes health and wellbeing in the workplace. The prolonged employment of workers by the company as a result of changes in demography and retirement policy increased the need for this charter. Since the railway sector has a reputation for potential health issues due to physical work, the charter is an important sign of commitment by the ÖBB to continuously improving working conditions in the Austrian rail sector. Alongside classic prevention and health promotion approaches, personalised support and care is offered to employees ⁽⁹⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Social dialogue can make an important contribution to intergenerational fairness and solidarity.

The European Commission proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ highlights the central role of social partners and social dialogue in contributing to better governance and more effective social and economic reforms. Through their dialogue, agreements and joint actions, social partners can identify and promote measures that are mutually beneficial for workers and employers, while balancing the interests of different generations. This chapter has provided many examples of social partners contributing to intergenerational fairness at different interlinked levels – from very precise initiatives at the company level to more encompassing approaches at the national or European level, both within and across sectors.

Social partners can approach intergenerational issues from different angles. After the economic crisis of the 1970s, social partners were strongly involved in the promotion of early exit from the labour market. Such measures applied replacement notions, by which older and younger workers were considered as substitutes. As the costs and drawbacks of such early retirement became apparent, they have been gradually replaced by approaches promoting synergies between younger and older workers. Such measures build on the different profiles and the complementarities of younger and older workers, particularly with regard to skills. Social partners are also developing lifecycle approaches, with due attention to the changing needs and aspirations of individual workers throughout their careers. The actions of social partners cover a wide range of policy areas, including skills development and lifelong learning; social protection; active labour market policies and employment protection legislation; promoting a better work-life balance; and health and safety at work.

There is room for capacity building so as to ensure strong added value of social dialogue, including for the youngest generations.

A strong and effective social dialogue depends on certain key conditions. Social dialogue requires social partner organisations with an encompassing membership. The evidence presented in this chapter points to key challenges. In a context of overall declining union density, the

⁽⁹⁵⁾ EFBWW and FIEC (2010).

⁽⁹⁶⁾ Cremers (2004).

⁽⁹⁷⁾ EFBWW and FIEC (2017).

⁽⁹⁸⁾ Austrian Federal Railways (2006).

⁽⁹⁹⁾ Study on a Pilot project: Making the EU transport sector attractive to future generations – draft interim report.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ <http://karriere.oebb.at/en/top-employer/health-management>.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ COM(2017) 250 final.

youngest workers tend to have lower membership rates compared with their older colleagues. While employer organisations' density rates are more stable overall, their membership tends to be skewed towards larger and relatively older companies. Moreover, new forms of employment are increasingly blurring the distinctions between workers and employers, rendering their interest representation more difficult. Self-employed workers are typically not covered by collective agreements, which are a key outcome of social dialogue by which social partners set minimum working conditions. More generally, declining coverage rates overall as well as lower coverage among younger workers point to a need for constant renewal and adaptation.

These trends also call for a continued support by public authorities, with respect for social partners' autonomy. If social partners in turn renew their membership, they will be uniquely well placed to identify emerging trends and needs in the labour market. By anticipating these trends with balanced and innovative measures, they can make an important contribution to intergenerational fairness and solidarity.